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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

November 27, 2002

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am writing to bring your attention to the growing problem of perchlorate contamination in Southern California's groundwater supplies and to request that the Department of Defense provide clean-up funding through the Formerly Used Defense Sites program to eligible communities as soon as possible.

According to a recent report by the California Department of Health Services, perchlorate has been detected in 284 groundwater wells operated by 75 different water agencies throughout the state. Collectively these agencies serve 24.8 million people, representing 71% of the state's population. The problem is most severe in Southern California, where 267 of the contaminated wells are located.

The growing number of perchlorate contaminated wells is all the more alarming in the context of California's efforts to reduce its consumption of Colorado River water under the terms of the Quantification Settlement Agreement. While California water districts are working diligently to devise strategies to reduce the state's need for imported water, perchlorate contamination is threatening the native water supplies these agencies are relying upon to meet local needs. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California estimates that in its service area alone, lost well production due to perchlorate contamination could reach 57,000 acre feet annually.

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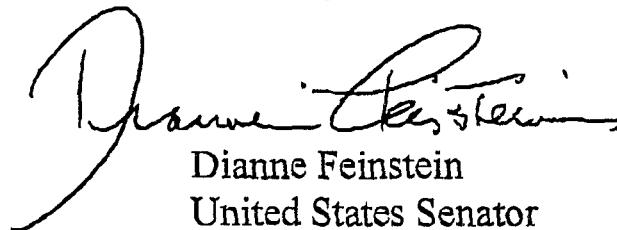
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The problem is particularly acute in the Inland Empire, where a seven mile long plume was discovered earlier this year in an area formerly occupied by the Army and several defense contractors involved in munitions manufacturing and storage. The plume, which is moving two to three inches per day, has contaminated 22 drinking water wells in western San Bernardino County, jeopardizing water supplies for approximately 500,000 local residents and businesses. Replacement water is generally unavailable due to lack of infrastructure and up to eight times more expensive than groundwater in the limited cases where it can be imported. Local officials have informed my staff that the problem is so severe that without federal assistance, the region faces a very real possibility of water rationing or of having to supply customers with bottled water.

Because many of the contaminated sites in Southern California involve former defense facilities, the Department of Defense bears a special responsibility to help remedy the situation. I would appreciate hearing from you whether you intend to make FUDS funding available to assist in the clean-up of perchlorate contaminated wells in Southern California.

Thank you for you very much for your immediate attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator